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THE LOUDEST MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

FDC 63480

RIP

SEPTEMBER 1995

\$3.99 USA/CANADA £2.75 U.K.

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have in common?**

Answers inside!

TRENT REZNOR

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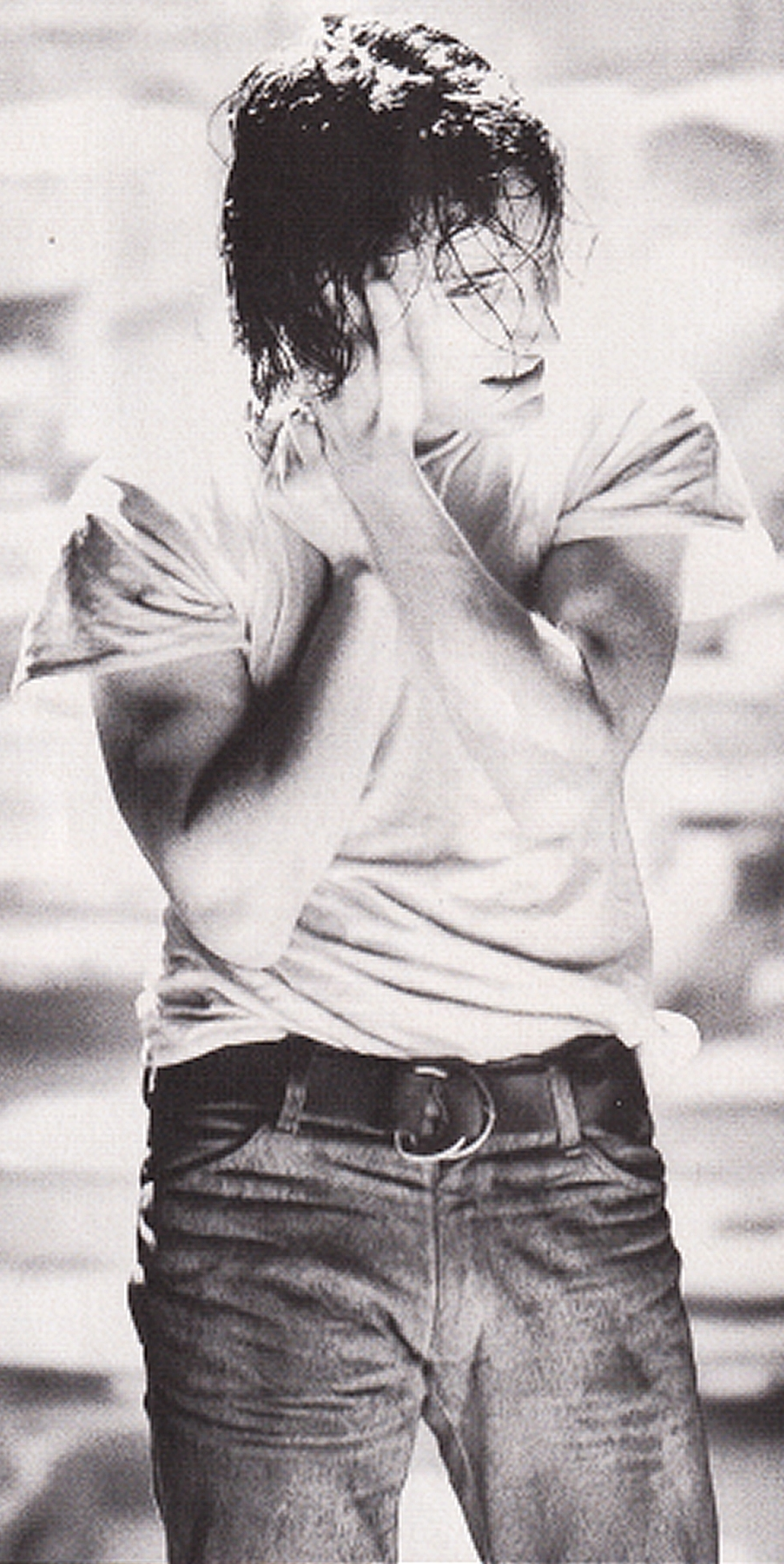
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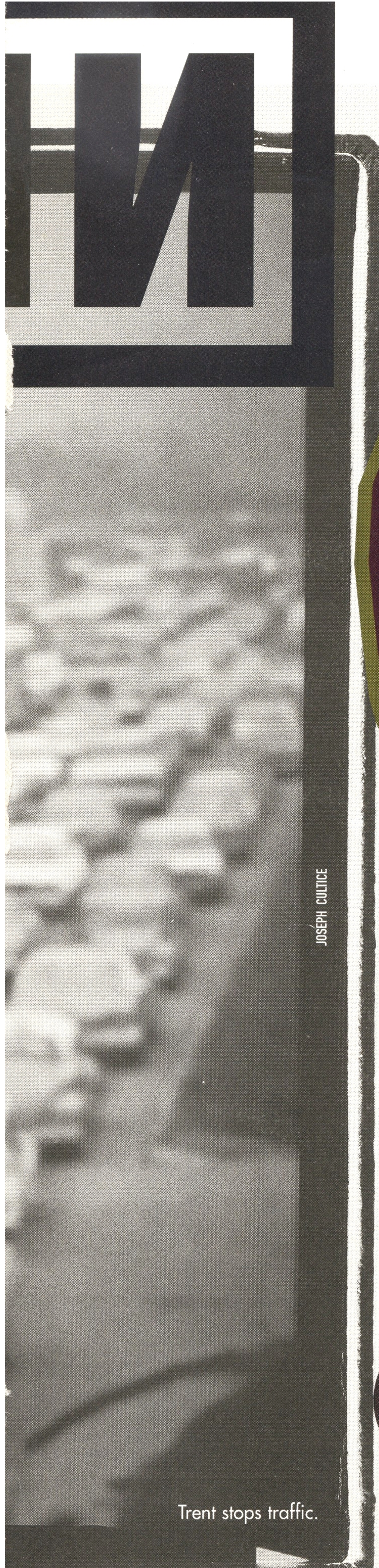


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LIVING ON THE THE REZNOR'S EDGE

by MURRAY ENGLEHEART





JOSEPH CULTICE

Trent stops traffic.

Trent Reznor was wearing a Machine Head cap. Robb Flynn, Machine Head singer/guitarist, couldn't believe it when I told him. He thought I was kidding. I had to tell him twice. Trent shrugged the garment off as just being "merchandise" rather than an indication of his admiration for the band, but it seemed to be some sort of sub-divine warning of what Nine Inch Nails were about to unleash onstage.

Somewhat of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the same quiet, polite singer who gently directed a member of another band's touring party where they needed to go during our interview was transformed into a f!cking monster with all of hell, all of Armageddon, all of evil breaking out around him—and from him. Nine Inch Nails are scary shit.

At Sydney, Australia's Eastern Creek, you could feel—almost see—the night air, heavy with fog, shudder when NIN kicked in. The volume, the eerie, almost otherworldly, alien-type lighting and the incredible cold, clinical ferocity and what seemed like very real violence taking place on and from the stage combined for a harrowing effect. It's how classical composer Wagner might sound in 1995.

Still, Trent says he is keen for the next NIN album to be more of a group effort than a commune from his very private hell way south of Heaven. If a sequel to '60s "ultra-violence" flick *A Clockwork Orange* is ever produced, the makers of the soundtrack are at the ready.

"We didn't want to be safe on this tour," explains Trent, who was keen to go and catch Ice-T doing a rap set before metal alter-ego Body Count stormed the stage. "If you go out with no production, wearing blue jeans and a flannel shirt, no one's going to make fun of you, no one's going to be challenged by that, really. You're not opening yourself up to any degree of criticism. We decided to take in a pretty over-the-top production sense of an environment that might really help accentuate the mood of the music. Like when something's intense, when there're so many lights in your eyes it's hard to watch—in the sense of transforming the whole environment into something that can be oppressive...or seductive. That led to designing the sets," the singer explains. "I wanted to use the idea of raw wood and rubber, two textures against each other that you don't see in a normal rock set. In real life our guitar player wears more outrageous things than we do onstage, and he wanted to express himself, and f!k, we do what we want to do. Watching Ziggy Stardust tapes was more of an influence than Nirvana. We kind of wanted to put on a show not to be antifashionable, but because it's more really where we're coming from."

That place, of course, isn't a particularly pretty region. While the NIN clan were unpacking their belongings after a collective move to New Orleans, one of the movers approached Trent about an item in the truck. He had claimed the piece of criminal history before he left Le Pig studios, the birthing place of the hypnotic purgatory of *The Downward Spiral* album and the site of the Manson Family's 1969 Tate house killing field.

"The moving guy asked, 'What the f!k do you have a door for?' " Trent laughs quietly. "We told them, and they said: 'Oh, man! Does it still have the blood on it?' That was kind of a consolation prize for getting ripped off for the amount of money we ended up paying to be there."

Money, incredibly enough, was at the root of NIN's appearance at Woodstock '94 and their dawn-of-time-type performance with mud as Reznor's filthy holy water.

Their set will go down in rock history as one of the finest high-drama rock events of any description—side by side with Hendrix' guitar immolation at the 1967 Monterey Pop festival and

Iggy Pop's walk
on a



Trentangst

"If you were a teenage boy going through puberty, you had Gene Simmons to guide you through that confusing time."

sea of hands at a festival in Cincinnati in 1970. For Nine Inch Nails, Woodstock '94 was great theater just waiting to happen.

"It just erased all inhibitions. It was probably the most nervous I've been in as long as I can remember," says Trent, reflecting on his Woodstock '94 performance. "I guess it was perceived as great theater. For me, it was a pretty true moment. When I got offstage I felt like it worked, I felt like I connected. I mean, it didn't sound worth a shit. My high was blown when I actually heard the tape the next day."

Last year Nine Inch Nails grabbed the world by the balls and squeezed. The kid who was intrigued by the echoes of his own mind in Pink Floyd's *The Wall* had hungrily thrown himself at some sort of alienation-transfer process of what he loved in Floyd's epic of negativity and cleaned up with his outpouring. A fringe benefit of that success was being approached by Oliver Stone—himself more a maverick than a cog—to do the soundtrack collage for *Natural Born Killers*.

In August of 1993 RIP ran an interview with AC/DC's Angus Young which made mention of AC/DC being the closest thing there is, in these times, to blues elder statesman Muddy Waters. A reader took exception to this statement and fired off a letter saying if anyone was akin to Muddy it was Trent

"I'll just say the words enema bag had something to do with it."

JOSEPH CULTICE

Reznor. Yeah, it beat me too. But the NIN central effigy is doing some sort of blues.

And, according to Courtney Love, of all people, he is doing it from a feminine standpoint.

"I know what she's saying, I think," Reznor responds thoughtfully. "The degree of vulnerability is probably what she's reading as being feminine because on every song there's an AC/DC [element—no, he's not referring to the band], macho-man perspective. But there's something creative. I don't mind an observation like that at all. It's unusually flattering for her to say something like that. She said that same thing to me, actually. She likened that to one of the reasons she liked the music because that was how Kurt used to write as well. At the time, I took that as a compliment." At the time? Of course, the rumors flowing around Ms. Love and Mr. Reznor ran rampant—she pursued him heavily, they were buying a house together in New Orleans, he was running scared from her insistent advances—to the point of ducking out on a hotel balcony to avoid her.

Trent acknowledges that his band—and himself as magical ringleader—tends to inspire extreme reactions. "If you mean there was a woman backstage with fangs, that's happened a few times," he admits. "There's been so many other ridiculous backstage situations that that one kind of pales in comparison—like when we had Jim Rose on tour. Jim Rosé ended up being my best friend, always a fun guy to hang

All the pigs lined up.

what was the most ridiculous situation he could come up with. The mentality was no one does anything they don't want to do; it's all in good spirits, and no one takes advantage of anybody. I'm just debating whether I want this to come out in print..." He pauses, letting out another rare, quiet laugh. "It wasn't like we were out f!lking girls backstage or anything like that. The first day we were around him, he had my drummer eating glass! Rose said, 'Chew it up and drink!' I asked, 'What the f!lk are you doing?' Then my drummer said, 'He says it's okay.' I said, 'But he's not doing it!' That sort of thing. He could take that to almost any level of..."

Speaking of, shall we say, differing tastes...does Trent consider Nine Inch Nails good music to accompany sex?

"I don't think so, personally. I've heard a lot of people say that to me. I can't because I start thinking about it and I'm back in the mixing room thinking the snare drum's too loud! It doesn't work for me that well," he reveals, laughing. "I guess for a certain mood of sex it could be. I wouldn't think it was for your caressing, intimate-loving, feel-good, lit-candle-type, I'm-in-love-with-you sex, but it would be a nice variation."

Variety was at the heart of the *Kiss My Ass* KISS tribute album. NIN were approached to record a track, but for some reason didn't end up on the finished product.

"Gene Simmons himself called me up, and you're not going to say no to Gene Simmons if you're me," Trent recalls. "He was my idol when I was 13 years old. On further inspection the dream list of bands that he recited to me over the phone got whittled down to about one out of 20 bands like Toad the Wet Sprocket and that kind of shit. Anyway, the song was going to be 'Love Gun.' I wanted to do 'Parasite,' but Anthrax was doing it. I was going to do a total gay disco version of 'Love Gun' because I thought that would probably be most unlike the other bands, and they probably wouldn't like it. It would put them in an interesting position. I would have done it in the greatest sincerity, though."

"At the time, if you lived in America, KISS were the greatest thing in the world. If you were a teenage boy going through puberty, you had Gene Simmons to guide you through that confusing time." Trent's voice drops to a whisper, "They were the greatest," he pauses for a breath. "If you liked the Clash, you were living on the edge in the town that I grew up in—and I did." And Trent still lives on that edge, the Reznor Edge, no matter what town he's living in. •